

Post-Event Summary Report

Name of Event: White House Conference on Aging
Community Forum

Date of Event: March 22, 2005

Location of Event: Florence Civic Center, Florence, SC

Number of Persons attending: 134

Sponsoring Organization: Vantage Point, a division of
CareSouth Carolina, Inc.

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List of Participants' Issues:

Priority Issue #1: Healthcare

- A) Access to services and affordability
- B) Need to enhance and encourage healthy lifestyles/disease prevention
- C) Addressing the cost of healthcare premiums and pharmaceutical costs

Proposed Solutions:

- A) As the wave of Baby Boomers approaches Medicare's eligibility age, it will become increasingly difficult for the federal government to fund this program without passing along more of the costs to consumers. The Medicare program must be strengthened. Over 40 million older and disabled Americans rely on the Medicare program for their health insurance. Across the board we need to strengthen the traditional fee-for-service Medicare program for those who will continue to rely on it, even as other types of coverage options are expanded.
- B) There are inadequate numbers of qualified service providers in this region, particularly in rural areas. This impacts an older person's choice regarding from which provider they would like to receive services.

- C) Beneficiaries should be protected from the continued growth in out of pocket health care expenses. We recommend that the Medicare Part B deductible be indexed to the general inflation rate (i.e., Consumer Price Index), not Part B health costs, so it more closely reflects changes in a beneficiary's cost of living.

Priority Issue #2: Need to Develop Senior Friendly Communities

- A) Transportation
- B) "One-stop shops" including care navigators, e.g., case manager, to help inform people about the various support systems elements available to them. Also to include: health, legal, financial, and protective services. One example: Aging and Disability Resource Centers
- C) Configuration of Senior Centers to appeal to the next generation of senior citizens
- D) Integration of the elderly with the non-elderly community
- E) Strategies for changing attitudes toward aging
- F) Increasing opportunities for volunteerism and other forms of civic engagement
- G) Promoting expanded opportunities for companionship to reduce isolation and loneliness
- H) Exploring the roles of religious institutions

Proposed Solutions:

- A) As stated in the Older Americans Act, it is our responsibility to assist older people in this country in exercising freedom, independence, and the free exercise of individual initiative in planning and managing their own lives, full participation in the planning and operation of community-based services, and programs provided for their benefit. This includes providing seniors with the information they need to make informed decisions about the services they would like to receive from local providers. We recommend expanding the availability and use of self-directed services that enable consumers to coordinate and manage their own care, especially where technology can enhance benefits, services, and independence in more cost-effective ways.

Priority Issue #3: Long Term Care and a Continuum of Care

- A) Redress the balance of institutional long term care and home and community based care based upon choice
- B) Home and community-based care following hospital stays
- C) Provide funding for cost/beneficial services for cost avoidance when using public funds.

Proposed Solutions:

- A) Although home and community-based services may be less expensive than institutionalized care, most states are not shifting Medicaid funds from the nursing home setting to alternative settings. We recommend that the federal government

mandate to the states a graduated percentage increase, over a five-year period, to shift from using Medicaid funds to pay for institutionalized care to the desired community-based care.

- B) We recommend the federal government require states to change Medicaid's minimum income limit from SSI eligibility to the QMB limit, allowing seniors with very low incomes to be able to receive assistance in a non-institutional setting.

Priority Issue #4: Caregiving

- A) Need to support caregivers
- B) Incentives to encourage family members to care for aging relatives
- C) Caregiver support: training, respite, information, referral, needs assessment and financial support for family caregivers.
- D) Training and financial support for paid caregivers
- E) Grandparents raising grandchildren

Proposed Solutions:

- A) We recommend providing more flexibility in the delivery of services and reimbursing non-traditional service providers (e.g., friends, relatives, and neighbors). Seniors and their family members should not be limited to the type of service provider with whom they may contract for services.
- B) We also recommend developing more varied home- and community-based services, including information and transportation, to enable seniors to maintain their independence and dignity.
- C) To serve more clients and to offer more services to these individuals, additional FCSP funds are desperately needed. We recommend a significant increase in funding for the FCSP.
- D) We recommend supervision from Social Service Agencies to ensure persons are not being abused or neglected in the home environment.
- E) Increase public awareness of the Family Caregiver Support Program.
- F) Increase public awareness of Family Caregiver Support Groups.

Priority Issue #5: Planning for the Future

- A) With limited resources in government, there is a need to emphasize planning for individual responsibility
- B) Save for an adequate retirement
- C) Employer based pensions and health insurance

make informed decisions about their retirement.

- B) Prevent the conversion of defined benefit plans to cash balance plans, which violate federal laws governing age discrimination;
- C) Strengthen private pension systems by implementing shorter vesting periods, improved coverage standards, and better disclosure requirements to increase the number of persons receiving pensions and the average pension amount.
- D) We recommend expanding the availability and use of self-directed services that enable consumers to coordinate and manage their retirement, especially where technology can enhance benefits, services, and independence in more cost-effective ways.
- E) Increase awareness about Reverse Mortgages and fund agencies to provide assistance with applications.

Priority Issue #6: Housing

- A) Housing affordability and availability
- B) Residential design, including home modification relating to safety and convenience
- C) Urban vs. Rural

Proposed Solutions:

- A) As the oldest-old continue to live longer, their need for Older Americans Act (OAA) services will continue to increase. To provide for a functional living environment for an aging America, we must prepare now to meet this increased demand, especially in the area of housing. Recognizing the benefits of providing an opportunity for seniors to remain as independent as possible, one of the biggest concerns for the future is the availability and affordability of manageable housing.

- B) Not all seniors will want to live in planned communities; however, this option needs to be available for those who want it. While continuing care retirement communities are not widely available, they provide the privacy of independent living as well as long-term care all under one "roof". We recommend the availability of a variety of housing options serving people of moderate and middle incomes, ranging from single-family communities and service-enriched senior communities (i.e., planned, secure communities with shopping and recreation in the area) to continuing care retirement communities. We support an increase in private-public partnerships to increase functional housing in urban and rural communities across the region.

Priority Issue #7: Workforce Issues

- A) Opportunities for older workers/retraining
- B) Coming shortage of trained workers
- C) Shortage of workers for senior services
- D) Significant need to develop the geriatric healthcare workforce

Proposed Solutions:

- A) As we anticipate the wave of Baby Boomers who are nearing retirement age, preserving the value of their pension plans is crucial. Recommendations to retain older workers and encourage their reentry into the work force must be seriously considered. (It is anticipated that a dramatic decrease in younger workers will jeopardize the adequacy of America's work force.)
- C) Encourage the nation's employers to develop business models for recruiting and retaining mature workers;
- D) Improve the effectiveness of One-Stop career centers to connect mature workers to employment and training opportunities;
- E) Eliminate penalties to low-income older workers who rely on scarce employment and training opportunities;